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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: HOLDING US TO THE RULES ON MIL-MIL  
COOPERATION

Classified By: Charge Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Turkish General Staff (TGS) has continued its trend, seen since late 2006, of tightening requirements and more strictly enforcing rules for routine military cooperation, within established bilateral agreements. On October 31, TGS informed us that we would be held more strictly to our advance schedules for Cargo Hub flight operations at Incirlik Air Base; routine adjustments are still possible but more difficult. Recent US Navy ship visits have been complicated by unusual requests from port authorities, including demands for crew lists. US construction projects at Incirlik have been delayed by a stricter TGS interpretation of relevant agreements. While the increased scrutiny has not significantly hampered our operations, it may limit flexibility to deal with future contingencies. End summary.

#### Air Cargo Hub Operations

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12. (C) An October 31 TGS decision to more strictly enforce Cargo Hub flight operations based on the number of pre-approved and pre-scheduled sorties per day/month is a departure from a previously more flexible approach and was announced with only 12 hours advance notice. Where we had previously coordinated schedule changes locally, we are not required to submit an exclusive flight plan and obtain diplomatic clearance for each additional mission. As it currently stands, the TGS decision will limit our flexibility to adjust missions based on operational needs, since diplomatic clearance for individual flights can take up to seven days. We are seeking to clarify with TGS the specific way-ahead for Cargo Hub operations.

13. (C) TGS has also recently delayed construction of new housing for American personnel at Incirlik due to a dispute over the sourcing of construction material. TGS is now implementing a stricter interpretation of existing construction agreements to favor purchase of local materials over imports, which it had previously not pressed. TGS has directed that some construction work be stopped until negotiators reach a solution.

## Ship Visits

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14. (C) Recent visits by US Navy ships to Turkish commercial and military ports have been complicated by unusual requests for documentation, including demands for crew lists. During the October 28-30 visit of the USNS Gianella to Mersin to deliver aviation fuel for use by the Incirlik Cargo Hub and 10th Tanker Wing, port authorities eventually agreed to recognize the ship's sovereign immunity but insisted on obtaining a crew list -- a document USN ships are not able to provide as a matter of policy. Earlier, an unusual demand for a crew list also led to a truncated September port call by the USS Donald Cook. TGS and US Sixth Fleet officers reached a compromise solution at a subsequent meeting in Ankara.

15. (C) Although Turkish authorities had not demanded crew lists from US Navy ships in recent years, Turkish officials emphasize this is not a change in policy. A Turkish Navy Flag Officer claimed to us that the requirement, based on Turkish law, is being applied to all foreign vessels. A reported September Ministerial-level meeting with all Turkish harbor masters to discuss this requirement suggests that Turkey is in fact applying the law universally and is not specifically targeting the US.

16. (C) Comment: Despite recent bilateral tensions over Congressional consideration of an Armenian genocide resolution and PKK violence in the southeast, political designs are not necessarily behind individual cases of Turkish toughness. In fact, we have seen a trend towards

stricter enforcement of bilateral agreements, accompanied by a reluctance to make exceptions, since Gen Buyukanit became CHOD in August 2006. Turkish officials have long complained that the US constantly seeks to bend the rules and cut corners to suit our convenience. The TGS is putting us on notice that it is less inclined to acquiesce. End comment.

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